regard. Measures have been taken to enhance bilateral cooperation, particularly with regard to implementing effective border management. The concerned agencies of the two Governments remain in regular touch to coordinate efforts to tackle this problem. There are also bilateral institutional mechanisms, such as the Joint Working Group on Border Mangement and Home Secretary level talks, which have been evolved to specifically develop cooperation on security matters and to address these concerns. In pursuance of the decisions taken in these meetings, both sides have agreed to jointly coordinate measures, including stepping up vigil along the contiguous border districts of India and Nepal, to prevent misuse of the open India-Nepal border to counter activities directed against India.

Nuclear power status to India

46. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Nuclear Club continued to be restricted to the five acknowledged nuclear powers *i.e.* United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France and China;

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken, so far, to seek any formal recognition to India's nuclear weapons State status;

(c) what stand Government of India have, so far, taken over the question of signing of CTBT; and

(d) whether Government propose to evolve a national consensus on CTBT by consulting all major political parties in the country?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) The United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France and China are described as Nuclear Weapon States (NWSs) under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which defines a nuclear-weapon State as "one which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January, 1967". Since 1968, India has consistently rejected the NPT as a discriminatory Treaty. After the May, 1998 nuclear tests, the

Prime Minister declared "India is a nuclear weapon State. This is a reality that cannot be denied. It is not a conferment that we seek; nor is it a status for others to grant."

(c) and (d) India's position on the CTBT was articulated by the Prime Minister in the UN General Assembly in September 1998 and in Parliament in December 1998. This was reiterated by the External Affairs Minister at the UN General Assembly in September 1999. The priority of our meeting the country's national security concerns having been addressed, the government believes that we now need to convey reassurance to the international community and, in this regard, desires to develop a national consensus. That remains the Government's position.

Diplomatic relation with Afghanistan

47. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the nature of cooperation extended by Afghan Government to resolve the hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 by the militants to Kandahar;

(b) whether in the wake of its cooperation, the Afghan Government have asked for diplomatic relations between the two countries; and

(c) if so, what is the reaction of the Government with regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) The Taliban authorities in Kandahar who permitted the hijacked Indian Airlines flight IC-814 to land at Kandahar Airport, provided food and other facilities to the passengers and the aircraft. While adopting an attitude of correct facilitators, they consistently had their sympathies with the hijackers and their other supporters.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Does not arise.